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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 001324

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SUBJECT: GILAD ON HAMAS'S RELATIONS WITH JORDAN, EGYPT, AND IRAN

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: MOD Pol-Mil Bureau Head Amos Gilad told A/S Welch and DAPNSA Abrams on March 31 that Hamas' close relationship to the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Jordan would negatively impact Jordan's security. While he had raised the issue with GOJ officials, he claimed that they are "afraid to intervene in this problem." He contrasted Jordan's position on Hamas with that of Egypt, saying that Cairo wants to give Hamas time to "improve" itself. Gilad opined that Egypt is not realistic about Hamas's policies; Hamas will never adopt the Quartet principles, regardless of the amount of time it has to do so. He said that relations with the GOE on the Rafah crossing are good, however, and suggested that the Egyptians should take over responsibility for the Palestinian side of the crossing in addition to their own side. He claimed that the EU/BAM is ineffective. Gilad reported that the GOI's policy is to not talk to a Hamas-led government, but acknowledged that this will make cooperation on security and intelligence difficult in the future. Gilad also said that the Palestinians, Syrians, Iranians, and Lebanese are working together in what he characterized as a sophisticated game. He warned that Iran's future nuclear status will give it the ability to manipulate a "Hamastan" and "Hizballahstan" to act against Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. End summary.

12. (C) Political-Military Bureau Head Amos Gilad told NEA Assistant Secretary David Welch and Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Elliott Abrams on March 31 that now is the time for "creative thinking" on how to deal with a Hamas-led Palestinian government. He said that Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmud Abbas will pass all control of the PA to Hamas in a few days, and claimed that Egypt and Jordan are afraid of this situation. He remarked that "even Saudi Arabia doesn't like it."

Jordan and Hamas

13. (C) Gilad explained that Jordan's concern is the close connection between Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the Brotherhood's political arm, in Jordan. He assessed that this is a sensitive issue for the Jordanian government because the MB is entrenched in refugee camps in Jordan that are "volcanoes," and the MB's relations with Hamas would make security worse for Jordan. He said that containing Hamas is the GOI's top priority because cooperation between Hamas and the MB would "change everything," especially given that "the security of Jordan is the security of Israel." Gilad asserted, however, that the GOJ is "afraid to intervene in this problem." He said that he recently raised the Hamas/MB connection and implications with Jordanian Prime Minister Maruf al-Bakhit and GID Chief Muhammad Dhahabi, but that he has not seen any results. He advised the A/S and DAPNSA to stress to the GOJ the need for cooperation and intervention with Israel. USSC Lt. Gen. Dayton informed Gilad that Jordanian contacts have told him that they want to support Abbas, and are willing to train and equip Palestinian security forces under Abbas. He said that the GOJ has offered significant intelligence on the MB and IAF, and that it is very proactive. A/S Welch affirmed that the GOJ is not as passive as the GOI thinks, but has different methods of intervening, such as working with Abbas and strengthening his organizations.

14. (C) DAPNSA Abrams asked whether Gilad thinks of Hamas as a violent, extremist Palestinian organization or part of the transnational MB. Gilad responded that he has read details of Hamas's relations with the MB in sensitive intelligence that has proven to him that Hamas is "in it for the long-run," and part of the MB. He says that Hamas also thinks of itself as a national movement that can defeat Fatah in the next elections, and is preparing itself for this eventuality, at which point it will be able to take over the schools, health system, and intelligence and security services. The Ambassador asked whether Gilad was referring to presidential elections in two years or parliamentary elections in four years. Gilad, without directly answering the question, said that Hamas claims it wants to cooperate with Abbas, but that it ignores him and over time Abbas will leave. Abbas's immediate successor in this case would be PLC Speaker and Hamas member Abdel Aziz Dweik.

15. (C) Gilad reported that the GOI has been discussing Hamas with the Egyptian government, but said that the bottom line is that the GOE is not "doing anything" except trying to buy time. He opined that the GOE is trying to give Hamas time because Cairo thinks Hamas will "improve," but remarked that this contradicts the picture Israel has of Hamas. He said that the USG should press Egypt to tighten its timeline for Hamas to adopt the four Quartet principles because Egypt is not being realistic about Hamas's policies. He assessed that regardless of the amount of time Hamas is given, it will never change its policies and adopt the Quartet principles. A/S Welch asked whether GOE officials would visit Israel soon, and Gilad replied that after the Jericho incident, Intelligence Chief Omar Sulaiman had delayed his trip. He is now talking about coming in May, ostensibly to allow time for the new GOI to be formed.

16. (C) Gilad commented, however, that there is increased interaction between Israel and Egypt on the Rafah crossing, and that the Egyptians are protecting the Philadelphi corridor with relative professionalism. Gilad said that, in his opinion, and not the official position of the GOI, the GOE should also take responsibility on the Palestinian side of the crossing to oversee the Palestinians. The Ambassador asked whether he prefers Egypt to the EU/BAM in Rafah, and Gilad responded that the EU/BAM is not efficient or relevant. He said the mission is physically present in Rafah, but that it is "not useless but close." He said that the EU/BAM is not connected to Israel's intelligence picture, and that Egypt has three intelligence services operating in the Sinai that are very powerful.

Israel and Hamas

17. (C) A/S Welch asked about Israel's contacts with Hamas, referring to the March 30 meeting between the A/S, DAPNSA Abrams, and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz (septel). Gilad replied that Israeli officials have been ordered not to talk to a Hamas-led Palestinian government, but that this would impede cooperation between security and intelligence services. He said that if the GOI stops all contact with the Palestinians, the Palestinians will have no alternatives for collaboration, and will all turn to Hamas. He also noted that the absence of coalition partners for Hamas within the PA and Hamas would make it easier to enforce a strict no-contact policy for the PA. Despite all possible efforts on security, he added pessimistically, in time the Palestinians will "do something" (i.e., a terror attack) that will force a "spectacular" response out of the GOI. "But even if we take over all of the West Bank, what else can we do?" Gilad concluded. DAPNSA Abrams informed Gilad that restrictions on dealing with a Hamas-led government would have implications for U.S. aid to Palestinians that also affects Israel, such as the wastewater treatment plant in Hebron. Gilad said that this is one reason why the GOI and USG need to have regular strategic dialogue more often.

Gilad's View of an Iranian
Strategic Threat

18. (C) Gilad went on to claim that Iran continues to enrich uranium, that Syrian President Bashar al-Asad "feels better," and that Hizballah is determined to commit a terror attack against Israel despite delaying it for the Israeli elections. He asked rhetorically, "Why is Hizballah confident enough to provoke us when we can endanger them in southern Lebanon?" He answered his own question by saying that everything "is combined now," explaining that the Palestinians, Syrians, Iranians, and Lebanese are no longer independent entities, but are working together in what he characterized as a sophisticated game. He warned that in the future, Iran's status as a nuclear state would give it the ability to manipulate a "Hamastan" and "Hizballahstan" to act against Israel, but also against Jordan and Egypt because they cooperate with Israel.

19. (C) Gilad advised, however, that the USG, Israel, Jordan, and Egypt have the cards to play together against an Iranian threat, and said that "we need to coordinate or the future will be very gloomy." He commented again that it is time for "creative thinking," because everyone is focusing on too many details and not on the big picture.

10. (U) A/S Welch and DAPNSA Abrams have cleared this cable.

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JONES